

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Hearing on the Condition of our Nation's Infrastructure:
Local Perspectives from the Mayors
June 12, 2008

Opening Statement of Senator Mike Crapo

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding a second hearing on the condition of our nation's infrastructure and on the proposed National Infrastructure Bank Act, S. 1926.

I agree that infrastructure needs outstrip available resources throughout our nation and I appreciate your willingness to look outside the box for funding solutions. However, I think we have to be careful to ensure that any legislation that we develop will provide for increased investment in all parts of the country, rural as well as urban.

At your first hearing, I had questions about the scope of the infrastructure bank, whether it included opportunities for rural states to participate. Since that time I have received feedback from rural states who are concerned that the infrastructure bank proposal, S. 1926, includes features that make it unlikely that a rural state with infrastructure needs would receive transportation and other infrastructure funds or assistance from the proposed bank.

The infrastructure needs of states like Idaho are acute and interconnected with the health and economic well being of the nation. It is difficult to see how these needs can be addressed given the proposed infrastructure bank's 75 million dollar project threshold and requirements which show a preference for urban projects of regional or national significance that leverage private financing.

Turning to transportation infrastructure, past studies in Idaho have shown that transportation needs in the state amount to many billions of dollars – far exceeding the amount of federal and state funding actually available to meet the needs of our highway, aviation, rail, and public transportation systems. The demand for transportation facilities and services is growing. In Idaho, we have large and important transportation needs, but individual projects with a \$75 million Federal component are rare. Up to date and efficient transportation systems benefit the country as a whole and a modest investment Idaho's infrastructure would benefit all.

Moreover, a more modest investment than \$75 million in projects to provide clean drinking water, improved wastewater treatment and housing would also provide far reaching benefits.

As we move forward, I want to work with you and other committee members to pursue a balanced and inclusive approach to meeting rural infrastructure needs as well as urban.

Thanks again, Mr. Chairman for scheduling this important hearing.